(b) whether due to this scuffles are taking place at several places between the harvesting labour let loose by the sugarcane factories and the cane-growing farmers which threatens the social harmony?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION: (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) As per the report received from the State Government of Maharashtra, the Minister's Committee for the State of Maharashtra have decided that the sugar mills in the State should pay first instalment of sugarcane price to the sugarcane suppliers as below:

(i) Sugar mills falling in the region(s) other than Marathwada and Vidarbha - Rs. 850/- per M.T.

(ii) Sugar mills falling in the regions of Marathwada and Vidarbha Region - Rs 800/- per PMT.

(iii) However, in respect of the mills of other region, if there is possibility of violation of NABARD's norms that sugar mill shall be at liberty to pay first instalment of Rs. 750/- M.T. instead of Rs. 800/- M.T. After payment of first instalment concerned sugar mills are at liberty to pay higher cane price than SMP as per their financial results, subject to the fulfillment of NABARD's conditions regarding restructuring of term loans. The first instalment is in line with the payment of SMP under Sugarcane (Control) Order and guidelines of NABARD for the restructuring package.

(b) All the sugar factories in Maharashra are crushing normally, since 25.11.2005

Msp for Wheat and Onion

†1070. SHRIMATI MAYA SINGH : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have contemplated to increase the minimum support price for wheat;

(b) if so, whether Government propose to increase the minimum support price of other agricultural products, particularly onion for which there was acute shortage in the country and as a result thereof its price increases also, so that incentives could be given to onion producers and its shortage could be met; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and Government's response thereon?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) The Minimum Support Price (MSP) of wheat at Rs. 650 per quintal for 2005-06 season has been recently announced by the Governement and there is no proposal before the Government to increase the MSP of wheat.

(b) and (c) The Government has no proposal to increase the MSP of agricultural products. MSP for onion is not fixed by Government. However, the Government implements the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) for procurement of horticultural and perishable agricultural commodities, including onion. MIS is implemented for a particular commodity on the request of the State Government which is ready to bear 50% loss (25% in case of North Eastern States), if any, in its implementation.

Plan for dry and farming

1071. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether dry land and the rain-fed areas, constituting 60 per cent of the zone areas in the country, are a major challenge; and

(b) if so, Government's plans to stimulate dry land farming for arid and semi-arid regions?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTUE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) Dry land and rainfed areas are a major challenge for the country because of their low productivity. The Ministry of Agriculture has formulated a new scheme 'Enhancing Sustainability of Dry land Farming Systems' to address the problems of dryland farming in semi-arid and arid regions of the country particularly in the districts having low annual rainfall and less coverage under irrigation.

Failure of BT. Cotton in Tamil Nadu

†1072. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the attempts of growers for producing Bt. cotton in Tamil Nadu are now ending in failure after the same failed in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, the facts in this regard;

(c) whether any assessment has been made for the loss incurred by growers of Tamil Nadu due to said reasons; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.